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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 002316

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/PASCUAL/RAMCHAND

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [KWBG](#) [IS](#) [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [ASEC](#)
SUBJECT: GAZA UPDATE DECEMBER 30, 1800 LOCAL: FEWER
AIRSTRIKES; ROCKETS CONTINUE

¶1. (SBU) Summary. From 1300 to 1800 local on December 30, 17 Palestinians were injured in Israeli airstrikes in the Gaza Strip, and at least 10 more rockets hit Israel. At least 360 Palestinians have been killed and 1100 injured in airstrikes through 1800 on December 30. Clashes broke out in the West Bank near Qalandiya, in which eight Palestinian youths were injured. President Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazen) cancelled planned PA Christmas and New Year's celebrations. Hamas spokesmen attacked Abbas and claimed PA leaders are planning to displace Hamas in Gaza at the conclusion of Israeli military operations there. End summary.

17 Injured in Airstrikes;
Grad-Type Rocket Stretches East to Rahat

¶2. (SBU) Gaza-based contacts and Israeli press report that IAF airstrikes hit several houses and "government" facilities in the Gaza Strip, but significantly decreased from 1300 to 1800 local on December 30 compared to earlier periods. Gaza-based contacts report that IAF fire destroyed a Hamas military-wing leader's house in Gaza City at about 1500 on December 20, and that Israelis speaking Arabic called the house minutes before the airstrike and demanded the residents evacuate. A defunct dairy processing plant in the same neighborhood was also hit and heavily damaged, according to these contacts. At 1430, Palestinian press reported two airstrikes in northern Gaza near Bayt Hanun injured three Palestinians. Gaza-based contacts said the strike appeared to target a Hamas military-wing training facility. At 1515, several IAF planes fired rockets into open areas in northern Gaza outside Bayt Hanun, without causing injuries, according to a political contact in north Gaza. Airstrikes were also reported at around 1520 in Khan Yunis.

Qassams, Grads Strike Negev Towns

¶3. (SBU) From 1300-1315 on December 30, Gaza-based contacts report two Qassam rockets were fired from northern Gaza and landed in fields near Sderot, and three others landed over 1km away from Sderot. Israeli press did not report injuries or property damage from these strikes. At around 1425, a Qassam rocket hit a house in Sderot, causing significant damage but no injuries. At around 1530, two Qassam rockets landed in the Shaar HaNegev region, without causing reported injuries or property damage. At 1555, Hamas outlets claimed to have launched a Grad rocket toward Beer Sheva. Israeli press reported that a Grad-type rocket struck near Rahat, but did not cause injuries or significant damage. (Note: Rahat is roughly 16km north of Beer Sheva, and this Grad is likely the rocket Hamas intended for Beer Sheva. Rahat is an Arab-Israeli town approximately 35km from likely Gaza launch points, and has not previously been targeted by rockets. End note). A rocket hit Ashkelon at around 1715, but Israeli press did not report injuries or property damage.

West Bank and Jerusalem Clashes

14. (SBU) At 1300 local, clashes between Palestinian protesters and the IDF/border police erupted near Qalandia checkpoint (south of Ramallah). Protesters threw rocks and Molotov cocktails at Israeli forces and burned tires near the checkpoint. The IDF dispersed rioters with teargas and rubber bullets. At least eight Palestinian youths were injured. Two demonstrations were organized in Asira al-Shamaliya and Qusin villages in the Nablus area. No clashes with the IDF reported. A few dozen Palestinian and international protesters demonstrated in front of the U.S. Consulate General facility in East Jerusalem, protesting IDF operations in Gaza. The protest was peaceful and did not disrupt USG operations.

Political Reactions

15. (SBU) President Abbas issued a decision to cancel all New Year and Christmas celebrations "to protest the Israeli aggression on Gaza."

16. (SBU) Hamas pledged to continue resistance in Gaza, with senior Hamas spokesman Ismayil Radwan claiming that "in the face of this terrorist and barbaric aggression, we affirm that our will won't be broken, we won't hoist the white flag to the criminal occupiers and will face the Zionists with more steadfastness." Radwan threatened to "step up retaliation against Zionist occupiers." Hamas outlets

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claimed President Abbas "is working in coordination with Israel and the Egyptian authorities, and is preparing to take control of Gaza following the IDF military operations." Hamas claimed that "President Abbas ordered PA officials in Ramallah to set up an operations room in preparation for what he termed 'the downfall of the Hamas regime in Gaza' and this scheme is supported by the PA interior minister and security chiefs."

WALLES